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Saami communities protest against mining on their lands in the Kalix River Valley

The Saami communities of Girjas and Laevas say no to exploration and mining proposed by Kiruna Iron AB along the Kalix River Valley. The Saami communities have declared in an initial meeting with the company that they do not accept exploration or mining on their traditional lands and that the consequences of such activities would be devastating for the environment and Saami land uses.

Kiruna Iron AB, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Australian listed Scandinavian Resources Ltd, plan to apply for planning permission for two mines – one for Ruovdenjunnji/Ekströmsberg and one for Rakkurijokki. This planning permission is the first step towards opening the mines and the environmental impact assessment processes have already begun. Ruovdenjunnji, south of the Kalix river, is in previously undeveloped mountain areas. Both proposed mine sites are in nationally recognised reindeer herding zones and within Natura 2000 areas. Mining in these areas risks significant negative impacts on the Kalix river, one of Sweden's four undeveloped national rivers.

“These mines would have catastrophic impacts for both our Saami communities and would completely undermine the possibility for us to continue reindeer herding on our lands. This would also open up our undeveloped mountain areas to international developers, whose only goal is to make money for their international shareholders” says Ingemar Blind, chairman of the Girjas Saami community.

“We will do everything we can to stop this short-term plundering of our mountains. We also know that other stakeholders in our region are of the same opinion: that an important natural environment will be permanently destroyed. The proposed mining plans also constitute a breach of our rights as indigenous peoples, which are protected by international law and which the Swedish state has committed to respect”, says Tor-Erik Huuva, the chairman of the Laevas Saami community.

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